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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 005359

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SUBJECT: EU HIGHREP SOLANA PRAISES DISENGAGEMENT, BUT
DISAGREES WITH ISRAELIS ON HAMAS/HIZBALLAH

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Gene A. Cretz for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶11. (C) Summary: According to the MFA and the EC delegation, High Representative Javier Solana's discussions with Israeli officials on August 28-30 focused on using the success of disengagement to foster movement on the roadmap. Despite a generally positive atmosphere, Solana made little progress trying to change the Israelis' restrictive view of crossings on the Gaza-Egypt border and the GOI found little support for its suggestion that Hamas should be prohibited from contesting the upcoming PA elections. Solana will return to the region in November. End summary.

Praise for Disengagement and Discussion of Gaza Crossings

¶12. (C) According to separate readouts from Emanuele Giaufret, head of the political and trade section at the EC delegation in Israel, and Samuel Revel, director of the Israeli MFA's EU office, Solana's main goal was to parlay the success of disengagement into positive momentum on the roadmap. Revel described the visit as "low key" and free of EU demands that have -- in Israel's view -- sometimes poisoned the atmosphere during past discussions with European officials. He called Solana's approach, which focused on practical steps such as resuming implementation of the Sharm el-Sheikh agreement, "very realistic." Giaufret said that Sharon spent part of his three-hour meeting with Solana praising the GOI-PA coordination of civil and security aspects of disengagement, but added that Solana's Palestinian interlocutors were "much less enthusiastic."

¶13. (C) Giaufret said Solana found the Israelis to be "not very open" on the question of border crossings between Gaza and Egypt. Revel admitted that GOI officials had told Solana that they are not amenable to a third-party role in the border crossings and intend to maintain "full control for the foreseeable future" of all cargo and people entering Gaza. Giaufret noted that the GOI had shown flexibility on "symbolic issues" such as allowing Rafah to remain open as a one-way exit from Gaza, as long as all incoming traffic is routed through Kerem Shalom or Nitsana. Revel said that on the margins of several meetings Solana's staff had told mid-level GOI officials that the Europeans will continue to see Israel as an occupying power as long as the GOI retains control over Gaza's borders, future port, and airport.

Disagreement on Hamas and Hizballah

¶14. (C) Giaufret claimed that Solana was surprised by the adamancy with which the GOI -- especially General Security Services Chief Diskin and Foreign Minister Shalom -- pushed for excluding Hamas from the upcoming elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council. Revel acknowledged that this is the issue on which the two sides are farthest apart. He protested that the Europeans are treating Hamas like Hizballah, and claimed that Solana had argued that participation in the elections might have a positive affect on the extremists.

¶15. (C) Revel said the GOI "made no progress" in its efforts to convince the EU to list Hizballah as a terrorist organization, although Solana -- who traveled to Lebanon on August 30 -- had told the GOI that he would not meet with any Hizballah members. Revel added that Solana had expressed concern that Iran's support for Hizballah gives Tehran unhelpful influence in the peace process. Both the EC delegation and the MFA said that the Iran-EU 3 negotiations played little role in their discussions. Revel speculated that Solana is concentrating on other issues where he has more influence.

Solana's Schedule and Planned Return in November

¶16. (SBU) According to the EC delegation, Solana met with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom, Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz, and General Security Services Chief Yuval Diskin while in Israel and Jerusalem. Solana met with PA President Mahmud Abbas, Prime Minister Ahmad Quraya',

Civil Affairs Minister Muhammad Dahlan, and Egyptian Intelligence Chief Omar Suliyman while in Ramallah and Gaza. Giaufret and Revel said that Solana will return to Israel in mid-November for the memorial service marking the tenth anniversary of PM Rabin's assassination.

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